



Knocking on Heaven's Door: Six Minor Leaguers in Search of the Baseball Dream

Marty Dobrow

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The rich slice of Americana found in minor league baseball presents a contradictory culture. On the one hand, the minors are filled with wholesome, family-friendly entertainment-fluffy mascots, kitschy promotions, and earnest young men signing autographs for wide-eyed Little Leaguers. On the other, they comprise a world of cutthroat competition in which a teammate's failure or injury can be the cause of quiet celebration and 90 percent of all players never play a single inning in the major leagues.

In *Knocking on Heaven's Door*, award-winning sportswriter Marty Dobrow examines this double-edged culture by chronicling the lives of six minor leaguers—Brad Baker, Doug Clark, Manny Delcarmen, Randy Ruiz, Matt Torra, and Charlie Zink—all struggling to make their way to "The Show." What links them together, aside from their common goal, is that they are all represented by the same team of agents—Jim and Lisa Masteralexis and their partner Steve McKelvey—whose own aspirations parallel those of the players they represent.

The story begins during spring training in 2005 and ends in the fall of 2008, followed by a brief epilogue that updates each player's fortunes through the 2009 season. Along the way Dobrow offers a revealing, intimate look at life in minor league baseball: the relentless tedium of its itinerant routines and daily rituals; the lure of performance-enhancing drugs as a means of gaining a competitive edge; the role of agents in negotiating each player's failures as well as his successes; and the influence of wives, girlfriends, and family members who have invested in the dream.

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